

IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM UPDATE REPORT APRIL 2009

This month's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP) monthly report will provide an update on activities of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Central Valley Water Board) ILRP, as reported in the Central Valley Water Board's February 5, 2009 Executive Officer's report. Future ILRP monthly reports will alternate between the Central Coast, Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Colorado River Basin, San Diego, and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board programs. English and Spanish translations of current and past ILRP program monthly reports can be found on the State Water Boards Irrigated Agricultural Waiver Program website:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/agriculture/

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CENTRAL VALLEY WATER BOARD IRRIGATED LANDS REGULATORY PROGRAM

(As reported in the Central Valley Water Board's February 5, 2009 Executive Officer's report)

Success Stories

- The efforts of the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program to shift the primary focus of Coalitions from monitoring and assessment to management practice implementation are beginning to show success. The Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition (Westside Coalition) recently announced the development of a new 'grant' program in which they are offering to their growers a 50% match on sediment control system installation and maintenance. Their ability to do this is based on the reduction in their monitoring costs, which are the direct result of the new Monitoring and Reporting Program adopted by the Regional Water Board in January 2008. A more focused monitoring effort ensures the Coalition continues to collect critical trend data and monitors where problems have been identified. The resources saved in monitoring are now being directed towards implementing projects that will improve and protect surface waters. The Westside Coalition's new grant program is the first manifestation of the success of the new MRP.
- On 25 November, the Executive Officer approved the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (ESJWQC) Management Plan submitted on 30 October 2008. The Management Plan addresses 125 water body / parameter combinations that have had two or more exceedances of standards in a three year period. The Management Plan also addresses TMDL requirements that have been incorporated into the Basin Plan. The Plan was developed through a close collaboration between Regional Water Board staff and the Coalition over a period of several months. The Coalition will initially focus its efforts on the highest priority water quality problems in three watersheds – Dry Creek and Prairie Flower Drain (Stanislaus County) and Duck Slough (Merced County). Although the focus will be on those three watersheds, general outreach activities and collection of information on management practices will occur through the Coalition. The ESJWQC proactively began their Management Plan activities, such as upstream monitoring and/or additional monitoring, outreach, grower meetings beginning in April 2008.

- On 18 November, the Executive Officer issued a letter to the Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition (Westside Coalition) approving the Coalition's Management Plan and Focused Watershed Improvement Plan for the Hospital and Ingram Creek Watersheds (San Joaquin/Stanislaus Counties). The Management Plan addresses 185 water body / parameter combinations that have had two or more exceedances of standards in a three year period. The Management Plan also addresses TMDL requirements that have been incorporated into the Basin Plan. The Coalition and Regional Water Board staff worked closely together over a period of months to develop the Management Plan. Although the focus will be on the priority watersheds, general outreach activities and collection of information on management practices will occur through the Coalition. The Westside Coalition proactively began conducting outreach and collecting information on management practices prior to approval of the Management Plan.

Long-term Program / Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

- On 17 December 2008, staff conducted the second long-term program stakeholder advisory workgroup meeting. The meeting was facilitated by the Regional Water Board's contractor, CSU Sacramento Center for Collaborative Policy (CCP). At the 17 December meeting, the workgroup ratified the draft Charter document describing the workgroup's structure, goals, and rules. Also, the workgroup came to consensus on the next steps in developing program alternatives and the basic elements of the alternatives. Each interest group will develop proposed long-term program alternatives, which will be the focus of the third advisory workgroup meeting scheduled for 17 February 2009.

- On 5 January 2009, the Regional Water Board's contractor, ICF-Jones and Stokes Associates (JSA) finished revising the Existing Conditions Report (ECR) for the long-term program. The ECR has been revised to address comments received on the draft version circulated for public comment in 2006 and to include data collected under the current ILRP. The ECR summarizes general surface and groundwater conditions over the entire Central Valley in order to support development of a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the long-term irrigated lands program. Staff is anticipating that some additional information may be necessary as long-term program alternatives and any necessary mitigation measures are developed. Any necessary additional information or clarifications of the ECR will be addressed during the development of the EIR. (AL)

California Water Code section 13267 Orders

- On 4 December 2008, the Executive Officer issued seven Notices of Violations (NOVs) to landowners and operators in Stanislaus County for failure to respond to a CWC 13267 Order. The 13267 Orders required landowners to fill out a one page form briefly describing why their parcel was not enrolled in the ILRP.

- On 8 December, 68 CWC 13267 Orders were issued to growers in Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Solano and Yolo Counties who were identified as not being enrolled in the ILRP. The recipients of these Orders were first issued an information postcard on 16 September 2008. Because they didn't respond to the postcard, they subsequently received 13267 Orders. Staff is steadily increasing its efforts to maximize participation in the program.

- On 12 December, staff contacted a previous complainant to provide an update regarding his 7 November report of excessive foam in the Colusa Basin Drain (CBD). Staff had conducted a site visit and collected water samples to be tested for measures such as methylene blue active substances (MBAS), which measures surfactant levels, and total organic carbon (TOC). Staff also contacted the California Rice Commission and the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition regarding the complaint. Staff will be preparing a final investigation report concerning the foaming event.

- On 30 December, the Executive Officer issued 681 CWC 13267 Orders to landowners in the Kern River Sub-Watershed requiring them to certify whether their irrigated lands have the potential to discharge waste to surface waters. The Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition had dropped those growers from their Coalition participant list, indicating that their lands had no potential to discharge to surface water. Over 233,000 acres in the Kern Sub-Watershed were dropped from the Coalition.

Outreach Postcards to Growers

Between 11 December and 24 December, 389 postcards were mailed to growers within Stanislaus and El Dorado County who are not currently enrolled in a coalition. The postcards issued to Stanislaus County growers are located in the Dry Creek watershed, which is a priority watershed for the East-side San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition. The intent of the postcards is to inform growers of the ILRP and their responsibility for waste discharge from irrigated agriculture. The postcards provide a potentially more cost effective means (over 13267 Orders) to enroll non-participating growers in the ILRP. In addition, growers who apply to enroll in a Coalition in response to the postcard save \$150 on their application fee versus responding to a 13267 Order.

Coalition Groups

- **California Rice Commission (CRC)** On 14 November and again on 12 December staff met with the CRC at the Regional Board office to discuss items in the Coalition Group MRP that should be incorporated in a CRC MRP Order. The Algae Toxicity Management Plan was also a topic of discussion during the meetings. Staff is currently completing the CRC MRP and attachments, which will be submitted for legal review. On 30 December, CRC submitted the 2008 Annual Monitoring Report.

- **Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (SVWQC)** On 1 December 2008, staff received the SVWQC revised Management Plan. Staff will provide comments to the SVWQC in January and work with the Coalition to determine how best to integrate TMDL requirements into the final plan. Finalization of the Management Plan is anticipated in January 2009. On 17 November, Staff attended a group meeting of the Lake-Napa Sub-watershed, presented information on the ILRP, and addressed many concerns related to management plan requirements and program costs. Recently, Tina Lunt, who serves as the Coalition lead with NCWA has announced her plans to accept a position with another agency. She will remain with the SVWQC through the Management Plan development process while NCWA seeks a replacement.

- **San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition (SJCDWQC)** On 19 December, staff received revisions and an addendum to the SJCDWQC Management Plan which conformed to the changes previously requested. The addendum included revisions to defined performance measures, a prioritized schedule for addressing all Management Plan watersheds, and an approach to address TMDLs. Additionally, Staff is setting up a meeting, per the Coalition's request, to discuss cost-effective alternatives to the Management Plan.

- **Westside San Joaquin River Watershed Coalition (WSJRWC)** On 26 November, staff received a semi-annual monitoring report from the WSJRWC for sample events occurring from March through August 2008.

- **Goose Lake Coalition** On 23 October, the Goose Lake Coalition submitted the Lassen Creek Management Plan Final Report. The toxicity to the test species *Ceriodaphnia dubia* (water flea) was demonstrated to be unrelated to agricultural discharges. Approval of the final report has been given and this management plan will not require further actions by the Goose Lake Coalition.

- **Westlands Coalition** On 6 November, Pleasant Valley Water District inquired whether the Central Valley Water Board would require additional monitoring sites to monitor discharges from Pleasant Valley irrigated lands, should Pleasant Valley Water District merge with Westlands Stormwater Coalition. On 18 December, staff sent a letter to Pleasant Valley Water District allowing the current monitoring site to fulfill monitoring requirements under the stipulation that if exceedances are detected, additional monitoring sites may be required. Staff reviewed the United States Geological Survey Report 02-4286 in response to the Westlands Coalition's request to waive a management plan requirement for electrical conductivity on Panoche-Silver Creek. The response letter has been revised and is currently in review. The MRP Plan is under review while staff awaits submittal of the revised and signed Quality Assurance Program Plan. The Annual Monitoring Report for the 2007-2008 storm season is currently under review.

- **Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition (SSJVWQC)** A late January 2009 meeting has been scheduled to discuss the SSJVWQC's MRP Plan for Order No. R5-2008-0005. Per the 2008 Order, the SSJVWQC must comply with the requirements in Monitoring and Reporting Program Order No. R5-2005-0833 until the new MRP Plan is approved. The SSJVWQC's four Sub-Watersheds submitted their Irrigation Season Semi-Annual Monitoring Reports as required by Order No. R5-2005-0833. Staff is reviewing the submittals. The Kern River Sub-Watershed's Management Plan for the Main Drain Canal remains under development. Central Valley Water Board staff's comments regarding the latest version of the Management Plan were provided to the Kern River Sub-Watershed on 28 November 2008. The Tule River Sub-Watershed's Management Plan for the Tule River at Road 92 was received on 3 December 2008. Staff is reviewing the submittal.

- **Data Management** A meeting between the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition and the SWAMP Quality Assurance (QA) Team from SWRCB previously scheduled for 29 January 2009 will be postponed. This meeting was scheduled at the Coalition's request and is to discuss and develop Coalition tools to achieve SWAMP comparable data as well as assist in laboratory performance issues. The SWRCB QA Team is funded by Proposition 50, and cannot be utilized until the State budget is determined. Rescheduling will take place as soon as the Proposition 50 funds are released. The ILRP Participant Monitoring Data webpage was modified on 20 October 2008 and 17 December 2008 to provide web access to Coalition monitoring data through December 2007 and Water District monitoring data through March 2008. Future updates are planned to add the California Rice Commission and update the Coalition monitoring data through 2008.

Individual Dischargers

- **Turlock Irrigation District** The Turlock ID 2007/2008 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) has been reviewed and the Executive Officer requested a Management Plan on 1 December 2008. The Management Plan will need to address exceedances of herbicides and physical parameters. On 5 January 2009 Turlock ID submitted a response letter to the Executive Officer addressing AMR comments and Management Plan requirements. Staff will be meeting with Turlock ID on 5 January 2009 to discuss and clarify Management Plan requirements.

Grant Management

- **Proposition 84** Staff has been working with the grant applicant, the Coalition for Urban/Rural Environmental Stewardship (CURES), to write a detailed Scope of Work for the grant agreement. On 18 December, all Proposition 84 grant work was suspended as directed by the Department of Finance Budget Letter 08-33.

- **Proposition 50** On 19 December, the Department of Finance via Budget Letter 08-33 notified that the San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District's Proposition 50 grant titled

Measuring the Effectiveness of Agricultural Management Practices is suspended due to the State budget crisis.

- **MOU Pilot Program** On 7 November, staff met with the Butte and Glenn County Agricultural Commissioners and staff in Willows to discuss the next steps for the MOU Pilot Program. Due to the temporary suspension of state contracts, staff extended the existing contracts to 30 June 2009. State and Regional Water Board management will be discussing MOU funding for the short and long term.

Committee Meetings

- **Technical Issues Committee** On 5 January a tele-meeting was held for the Management Plans Focus Group of the TIC. The group is discussing different priorities including resolving definitions related to Management Plans, performance goals and appropriate triggers.